Tikva Schein, "Entry on: Hercules on the Bayou by Connie Collins Morgan, Herb Leonhard", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/543. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

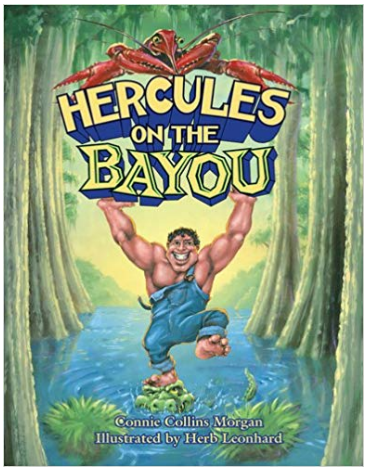
Connie Collins Morgan , Herb Leonhard

Hercules on the Bayou

United States (2016)

TAGS: Heracles Hercules





From *Hercules on the Bayou* by Connie Collins Morgan, illustrations by Herb Leonhard; text © 2016 by Connie Collins Morgan, illustrations ©2016 by Herb Leonhard used by permission of the publisher, Pelican Publishing Company, Inc. pelicanpub.com (accessed: January 14, 2019).

General information	
Title of the work	Hercules on the Bayou
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2016
First Edition Details	Connie Collins Morgan, *Hercules on the Bayou*. Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 2016, 34 pp.
ISBN	9781455621859 / 1455621866 (e-book)
Official Website	pelicanpub.com (accessed: October 15, 2018)
Genre	Adaptations, Illustrated works, Instructional and educational works, Myths

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Target Audience	Children (6–10 years old)
Author of the Entry	Tikva Schein, Bar-Ilan University, tikva.blaukopf@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk

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Creators



Connie Collins Morgan (Author)

Connie Collins Morgan is a native of Louisiana, born to a Cajun mother who sees herself as a Louisianan through and through, which has influenced her writing and focus. She is the author of three children's books including *The Runaway Beignet* (2014) and *The Cajun Fisherman and His Wife* (2018). She has also written a yet-unpublished fourth book called *It's time for bed, Granny*. She grew up in French speaking Lafayette and her childhood imagination ran wild on the Bayou, creating images which have since fueled her writing.

Collins Morgan has an MFA in Children's Literature from Hollins University in Virginia with an MFA in Children's Literature. Her thesis was on the topic of The Cajun I Am.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: October 15, 2018)

Interview (accessed: October 15, 2018) Last accessed 06/09/18

Bio prepared by Tikva Schein, Bar-Ilan University, tikva.blaukopf@gmail.com

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Herb Leonhard (Illustrator)

Herb Leonhard has illustrated over a dozen children's books and is also a cartoonist, technical illustrator and wine label designer. He has published more than thirty books in total. He has been working as an illustrator and graphic designer for over thirty years and has received many awards for his work.

As well as having provided artwork for numerous clients including Tori Amos, Pelican Publishing, Omnibus Press, Ashgate Publishing, Raven Publishing, Steiner Korea and D Magazine, Leonhard has set up his own company called The Prancing Pony. Through his company he publishes and sells a series of popular fantasy coloring books, storybooks and other items.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: October 15, 2018)

Leonhard's coloring books (accessed: October 15, 2018)

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Additional information

Summary

This book takes the Hercules mythos and places it in Louisiana, merging Cajun and Greek myth. Hercules becomes a Louisiana native, engaging in activities close to the heart of the stereotypical Louisianan lifestyle. The book forms an aetiology for many well-known Louisianan customs. Four short adventures structure the narrative. Each labor gives a basis for Cajun practices today.

Instead of focusing on the twelve labours of Hercules that make up the myth in the Classical tradition, Collins Morgan puts a modern twist on the myth. The immortal queen comes to Hercules in a dream and tells him to do four labors for her so that her "wrath will plague [him]…no more, and [his]…freedom will be" his.

For the first labor, Hercules kills an evil spirit which was also a man-eating crawfish. For the second labor, Hercules battled a "swarm of mosquitoes". The third labour has Hercules commanded to clear out the waste from the Mississippi River, to rise to which challenge he builds a levee, redirecting the river's flow. Once he has done this, Hercules clears the rivers of alligators and then redirects the river to its original path. The last labour has Hercules descending into the underworld and riding out on a giant catfish. Collins Morgan explains this as being the reason that catfish crave the darkness of night and can be found in the depths of the bayou. The story ends with the queen recognising the futility of her "evil scheme" and freeing Hercules. The king in pride "painted the sky with stars of his son", so the readers learn of the constellation of Hercules in the sky.

The last page of the book is given to a short summary of the Hercules myth and its connection to *Hercules on the Bayou*, and a glossary.

Analysis

The Olympian gods are referred to as "rulers of the universe" without names or being particular to any aspects of Greek mythology. The only characters named are Hercules himself and the mortal Cajun characters. Indeed, there is no identification of Hercules as of Greek provenance. This is a very soft introduction to Greek mythology and demonstrates the flexibility and pliability of the Hercules myth and the desire to make it part of modernity. The paring down of classically-identifiable names and details from the narrative inevitably turns the

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Greek myth into more of a universal topos.

Hercules is the adopted son of Claude and Claudette, a Cajun couple, placing him in a French-speaking milieu from the start. The adoption of Hercules into this environment is emblematic of what Collins Morgan has done with the myth. Collins Morgan includes Cajun dialect in the tale, e.g. page 8 (though there are no page numbers) "Bon Dieu, the sun done fried my brain". This inclusion of Cajun speech means that the book is well-suited for reading out loud, making this new myth part of the oral culture that has been part of mythology, both in the ancient Greek and Cajun traditions.

According to the Classical myth, Hercules shows his strength as a baby by throttling a snake from his bassinet. In this version, Hercules is floating down the bayou in a "gigantic turtle shell" and in the face of two snakes by his side, he has stuffed "cotton from the inside of his blanket...into the mouths of the snakes". The snakes, known as "poisonous water moccasins'" in the book are given an aetiology of being known as "cottonmouths". Thus Collins Morgans utilizes Classical mythology for aetiological purposes in a separate culture.

As well as paring down the number of tasks which Hercules is facing, Collins Morgan bulks up the accompanying narrative with more Cajun-related details. For example, after Hercules has been engaged in killing the crawfish, a culturally appropriate repast for the bayou area, the text then relates how:

"That evening the two of them feasted until their stomachs were full. Claude played 'Diggy Liggy Loo' on his fiddle while Hercules danced the two-step."

This interpolation of cultural detail makes the book a true blend of Cajun and Greek mythology, erring more towards Cajun than Greek. The book was acclaimed by School Library Connection & reVIEWS+ as "a delightful blending of Cajun folklore and Greek mythology".

The illustrations that accompany the text appear on every page as full spread pictures in a range of colours. For every illustration there are only a few lines of text. The effect is to make the book accessible to young children in the vibrancy and animation of the pictures. Details are included in the pictures that are not referenced in the text itself. For example, the picture of "the king" holding up the baby Hercules has the king depicted in the currently standard fashion for a cartoon

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	Zeus (white beard, golden crown in the jagged shape of a thunderbolt). This enables the person looking at the picture to make the connection between this retelling of the myth and the Greek mythology merely by looking at the illustration. Hera is not identified as such but is known simply as "the queen". She has a constant presence through the book as the threat towards Hercules but we don't know more about her than that. In this respect, the connection to Classical mythology is such that the reader is being exposed to hierarchy and tension between different groups (it is only said in passing that they are immortals and mortals – i.e. "she left the immortal world") but not about the others concerns that belie the gods-mankind relationship. Claude, Hercules' adopted father is persistently proud with Hercules' achievements e.g. "Claude laughed. 'That'll teach you a lesson, you no-good bloodsuckers!'" and the queen is accordingly wrathful e.g. "The fame of Hercules sent the queen into a rage". The connection given to the adopted father not only adds a certain amount of charm to the Hercules story in that this superhero is accompanied by his mortal and vulnerable father, but also it anchors the story firmly in its Cajun setting. Just as the father delights in his son's prowess, so the Cajun readers can identify with Hercules as "one of their own" and as an "adopted" part of their family. One can see the power of myth to add validity and strength to an otherwise minority part of society.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Heracles Hercules
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Character traits Childhood Coming of age Communication Emotions Expectations Family Freedom Friendship Heroism Justice Multiculturalism Relationships Storytelling Tradition Values
Further Reading	Hoena, Blake, *The 12 Labors of Hercules: A Graphic Retelling. Ancient*

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